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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000576

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TAGS: [AMER](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KSAC](#) [KHLS](#) [MOPS](#) [SENV](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: TROPICAL CYCLONE GONU CAUSES EXTENSIVE FLOODING,
DAMAGE IN MUSCAT AREA

REF: A. MUSCAT 574

[1](#)B. MUSCAT 572

[1](#)C. MUSCAT 571

[1](#)D. MUSCAT 568

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) With the departure of tropical cyclone Gonu from Omani waters on the evening of June 6, the Embassy is attempting to take stock of the storm's impact in the Muscat area. The condition of the Chancery is still being assessed, but there appears to have been no major structural damage to the building (ref A); Information Technology Systems are back up and fully operational. All American staff and their dependents are accounted for. Embassy families who were evacuated from low-lying residential areas have been allowed to return their homes. Some Embassy-owned/leased residences sustained varying degrees of water damage, and several remain without power (ref A). The Embassy will report on the status of American citizens in Oman septel.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Throughout the duration of the storm, officials from the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Muscat Municipality issued warnings, storm updates, and evacuation orders via TV and radio broadcasts (and in some instances, text messages). Residents told to evacuate their homes were given the addresses of shelter locations, mostly schools, in which to take refuge. Contacts report, however, that the many calls to the "999" emergency telephone number (similar to the "911" number in the U.S.) went unanswered or were met with a busy signal as callers overwhelmed the system. Except for some limited service outages, there was continuous cell phone coverage in the Muscat area and most land lines in non-flooded homes remained operational. Local access to the internet, however, was cut-off on June 6 due to the storm. While many local health clinics were closed, major hospitals remained open and provided medical treatment for storm-related injuries.

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to the local press and Embassy contacts, as well as observations by Embassy staff, parts of greater Muscat suffered extensive damage from the heavy rains and high winds associated with Gonu. Although there was no significant storm surge along the shoreline, flooding was widespread, particularly in areas near small valleys (locally called "wadis" in Arabic) that channel run-off rain into the sea and can quickly overflow. Media reported that 13 persons (all of them Omani, Indian, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan nationals) died on account of flood waters. The commercial area of the Qurum district, located in a low-lying area a few kilometers east of the Embassy, was inundated; some

establishments were completely under water. Farther east, reports indicate that portions of the Ruwi district, Muscat's principal business center, and the port area of Mutrah were similarly flooded. (Note: Low-lying areas of Mutrah and Ruwi were evacuated by the Omani military and police before and during the storm. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) To the west of the Embassy, parts of the Azaiba, Ghubrah, Ghala and al-Hail districts were also heavily damaged by flood waters. The al-Khoth dam located in the western region reportedly overflowed or possibly burst, helping to turn several wadis into raging torrents and sending a wall of water through one neighborhood that stranded residents on the roofs of their homes. The American International School of Muscat (TASIM) complex in Ghala, which includes staff housing, narrowly escaped major flooding from a nearby wadi, but remains without power. (Note: The Embassy is arranging for the delivery of generators to TASIM. End Note.) Across from TASIM and closer to the wadi, the Ghala Church and an adjoining Toyota dealership and service center were under several feet of water on June 6. Vehicles from the dealership are currently strewn about the area.

¶6. (SBU) As of June 7, flood waters in the Muscat area have significantly or completely receded. Some once submerged areas, such as the Qurum commercial district, are now free of standing water, although buildings and streets are coated with layers of mud and without power. The Embassy has been unable to verify claims of collapsed buildings, and some shops in affected areas of Mutrah, Ruwi and elsewhere have opened their doors. The Seeb International Airport will reopen to commercial traffic on June 7 at 18:00 local time. However, there is lasting damage to infrastructure, particularly roads. The major expressway connecting the

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eastern and western ends of the capital sustained major structural damage in some areas. Several lanes of the expressway near the airport are now non-existent, and a heavily-used traffic bridge at an expressway thoroughfare collapsed. Sections of other major traffic arteries and several secondary roads, including the principal road leading into the Azaiba residential district from the expressway, are completely washed out. Portions of the road connecting the port and corniche of Mutrah to other areas of Muscat were similarly destroyed.

¶7. (C) To help in recovery efforts, the government of Oman has declared Saturday, June 9 to be a holiday. Omani police, some units of which were operating on 24-hour shifts during the storm, are patrolling certain commercial areas to prevent looting. (Note: The headquarters of the ROP suffered major flood damage and, according to one contact, its mainframe computer system was wiped out. End Note.) Road repairs are already underway in some areas, and power crews are working around the clock to restore electricity. The Ambassador made yet another offer of U.S. assistance to the Omani government (refs A-C), but officials have politely declined to request help from the U.S. or any other country. (Note: The British Embassy confirmed that its offers of aid were also politely turned away. End Note.)

¶8. (SBU) Reports of damage elsewhere in Oman outside Muscat are incomplete, but contacts indicate that coastal areas, including the cities of Sohar and Sur, suffered similar flooding and damage as in the capital. Post will provide further updates septel as necessary.

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